-----Original Message-----
From: YScuba [mailto:YScuba@californiadivers.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 20, 2005 6:39 PM
To: Melissa Miller-Henson
Subject: Apologies

Dear Melissa,
Would you kindly forward this email, attached and below, to the members of the Blue Ribbon Task Force, and staff?
Thank you very much,
Jesús

Dear Mr. Isenberg,

I am writing to apologize to the members of the Blue Ribbon Task Force, and to clarify a statement I made before your august body on Tuesday, January 11, 2005. During my discussion regarding the criteria for the selection of the Central Coast Project, I made an incorrect statement of fact. I stated that some Rock Fish live as long as 225 years old, and that some do not reach breeding age until they are 25 years old. Normally I would not give such an off the cuff statement a second thought, but when an individual, for whom I have the highest regard and respect for, asked me to name this particular Rock Fish, I found it necessary to revisit my reference library. The closest I could get to a 225 year old Rock Fish, is the Rougheye Rock Fish with a recorded longevity of 205 years old, with 50% reaching maturity and reproductive age by 20 years old. The Yellow Eye Rock Fish lives to 118 years old, and reaches an average reproductive age at 22 years old at 18” long, and grows until their 30th year to a size of 36” and 25lbs. However, my interests in these statistics was not to impress you with the longevity of any particular species of Rock Fish, but to point out that most Rock Fish get to be frying pan size before they get reproductive size. Most of the longer living Rock Fish are deep water fish, and commercial fisheries regulations is now responding to depletion concerns.

While we share a general concern for the health of the ocean, as divers, we experience marine life at the shallower nearshore region. The maximum age in the nearshore rockfish varies from about 30 and 60 years old, depending upon the species. They reach breeding age between 3 to 5 years on average and most are fully mature by 9 to 10 years of age. With the most recent Pacific Fisheries Management Council regulations pulling in Commercial fishing to shallower depth, in some cases along side recreational fishing, this has put additional pressures on the shallow nearshore ground fish. Add the pressures of the commercial Live Fisheries within the kelp beds, and the addition of spearfishing within the kelp beds, there exists potential concentrated extraction of the largest and most highly reproductive Rock Fish breeding stock. This concern is not meant to negate the successful efforts by the CDFG to successfully protect the breeding stock. But, when spearfishing tournaments repeatedly return to the same kelp beds several times a year, and extract the largest and most reproductive fish, it is a concern that must not go unnoticed. Add to the spearfishing the Commercial Live Fishermen who have been known to stay in a particular cove until it is fished out, it brings concern to all divers. These are the points I was attempting to make, and that I should have focused on, not the longevity of a particular Rock Fish species. Please forgive me if I might have sounded misleading, and over enthusiastic in an effort to protect recreational diving depth kelp beds. In closing, it is amazing to think about what was happening in history when today’s mature and highly productive Rougheye Rock Fish were born 200 plus years ago.

Respectfully submitted,
Jesús C. Ruiz
SIG Recreational Diver Rep